

Transportation Advisory Note

+Project: **Proposed Demolition of Existing Dwelling & Erection of 2 New Dwellings at 6 Firs Walk, Northwood, London Borough of Hillingdon.**

Subject: Access & Highway Appraisal

Date: 25th March 2024

Overview

This Transportation Advisory Note is in respect of the above and as a highway access appraisal report it provides an overview of the suitability of the proposed access to provide vehicular access for the proposed dwellings and associated parking. The site is located to the west the centre of Northwood and to be accessed off Foxdell – see Figure 1 below.



Figure 1 - Site Location

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Related Planning Application History

30837/APP/2019/3096 - Erection of 3 x 4-bed dwellings with associated parking and amenity space and installation of vehicular crossover (involving demolition of 5 Firs Walk (Outline Planning Application with Some Matters Reserved) site – Refused & Approved on Appeal.

No objection from Highways.

30837/APP/2021/2577 - Reserved matters (landscaping, layout, scale and appearance) in compliance with Condition 1 of Inspector's Decision Letter dated 01/02/2021, Appeal Ref: APP/R5510/W/20/3253781 (LPA Ref: 30837/APP/2019/3096) (Erection of 3 x 4-bed dwellings with associated parking and amenity space and installation of vehicular crossover) = Approved.

No objection from Highways.

Existing Site Use

The site is currently occupied by a single detached residential dwelling, 6 Firs Walk.

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The proposed units will be accessed separately from the east via Foxdell and west via The Firs both of which, in turn, access off Dene Road. These roads are within a private estate and all the existing access routes are private roads. Dene Road is the main access to the adopted public highway of Sandy Lodge Way to the east and the A404 Rickmansworth Road, to the south west. Both The Firs and Foxdell are typical privately maintained estate roads with the latter terminating to the east of the site with a standard turning head – see draft proposed layout (**Appendix A**). It is suitably surfaced, has footways and streetlighting.

As shown within the proposed layout drawing (**Appendix A**) the extended Foxdell estate road will service an additional 3 units (Approved under 30837/APP/2021/2577 and not part of this application) including one of the proposed whilst utilising the existing turning head for all service vehicles. Both the proposed units will have one standard and one electric vehicle equipped parking spaces each and turn within the site.

Both Dene Road junctions with the public highway (stated above) have excellent emerging and forward visibility for drivers.

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Examination of the recorded accident/collision data (www.crashmap.co.uk) demonstrated that there have been no collisions in the vicinity of the existing access, Dene Road junctions or the immediate surrounding road network over the past 10 years.

It is acknowledged that the highway officer, at pre-application, requested the submission of TRICs data but for the nett increase of a single dwelling it is considered unnecessary given the likely very low impact. The long held industry average for dwellings within the UK was generally 7 vehicular trips per dwelling daily, however, a recent report by TRICs ('Guidance Note on the Practical Implementation of the Decide & Provide Approach' Feb 2021) found that the number of daily trips plus the desire to travel by car have dropped. The report states '*There is now evidence going back 25 years that we are travelling less today than we used to. On average, 16% fewer trips are made now than in 1996. We use motorised transport for almost 100 (14%) fewer trips per year than in 2002. Person miles are 10% less than in 2002 and people are spending 22 hours less time travelling than in 2005, and less than at the start of the 1990s...*'.

Studies have shown that even pre-Covid online shopping had been growing at around 10-12% per year and in 2018 represented almost 17% of total UK retail sales with a 30% decrease in physical shopping trips over the past decade and a 16% decline in distance travelled. The report adds '*The Covid-19 pandemic has amplified this trend. Office for National Statistics (ONS) retail sales figures show that online sales as a proportion of all UK sales hit a record high of more than 30% in May 2020 during lockdown...*'.

Evidence shows that the generation gap in how much people are travelling has closed and, most significantly, younger people are far less likely to have a driving license and subsequently drive less than previous generations. The report states '*It is important not to assume that future generations will follow the same patterns of previous generations as they age. Younger generations are travelling less – 20% less for 17 to 34 year olds and 10% less for 35 to 64 years olds... Driving license take-up: Specifically, whereas in 1993 55% of 17 to 20 year old males held a license this is now 33% with the corresponding figures for women being 42% and 29%...*'.

Apart from the Covid effect increasing the numbers of people working from home the recession and decline in disposable income will affect travel choices including social interactions, which are more commonly being undertaken online, all of which affect trip making. The report refers to the Department for Transport's substantive review of travel to work trends in 2017 which revealed '*...that there has been a substantial decrease in commuting trips between 1988/92 and 2013/14, from 7.1 journeys per worker per week down to 5.7 journeys. The average distance to work has increased by 10% and the number of people in work has never been higher. The net effect of this, despite the previous economic growth and population growth, is a decline in annual commuting trips from 8.5 billion to 7.9 billion.*'.

The long term effect of the Covid 19 crisis has yet to be fully assessed but it must be accepted that residents working practices, with an increase of home working, the increase in Teams and Zoom meetings online etc will have a major impact by reducing the peak hour travel rates over the coming years.

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An addition of 2 new residential units (nett 1) on the site, which is well located for alternative transport options, is not considered to be a significant increase in daily vehicular trips and it is therefore concluded that the existing highway network would satisfactorily accommodate the very low additional traffic arising from the proposed residential development, and the likely traffic impact of the scheme is considered to be acceptable.

Sustainability

The proposal site is approximately 500m and 700m from the nearest bus stops on Green Lane and Rickmansworth Road respectively and Northwood tube station located amongst other local services ie shops, public house etc within Northwood located approximately 685m to the south east.

The area of Northwood has a gentle topography suitable to encourage cycling and walking by local residents, replacing short car journeys to/from the local shops, school etc.

The Institute of Highways and Transportation (IHT) published guidelines on suggested acceptable walking distance in '*Providing for Journeys on Foot*' (2000). It states that '*The average length of a walk journey is 1km (0.6 miles) and this differs little by age, or sex remaining consistent since 1975/76*'. By this measure the centre of Northwood and surrounding area are accessible to pedestrians including local educational facilities, shops, pubs, restaurants etc.

Whilst the IHT guidance acknowledges that 'acceptable' walking distances vary between individuals and circumstances, Table 4 of the document, reproduced below, sets out suggested acceptable walking distances for pedestrians without mobility impairments.

	Local Centre	Commuting/School	Elsewhere
Desirable	200	500	400
Acceptable	400	1000	800
Maximum	800	2000	1200

Table 4 - Providing for Journeys on Foot – Suggested Acceptable Walking Distances - IHT

The benefits of non-car travel are clear environmentally but there is also a health benefit for the participants from reduction of stress by removing the need to drive long distances to personal health through walking and cycling. An often hidden benefit is the cost savings for the individual from car free travel. UK car owners spend over £3,500 to run their cars each year. Besides the purchase price, the biggest expenses of car ownership are petrol or diesel (£1,400+ a year estimated now due to rising petrol and diesel prices), motor insurance (£561 a year), and repairs and servicing (£273 a year). In addition, road tax, parking fees & permits, driving lessons, car clubs, fines and other upkeep expenses cost an additional £259 a year per vehicle. (www.nimblefins.co.uk). The centre of Northwood itself and down on into London are also within the Ultra Low Emission Zone (ULEZ) with its daily charge.

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Whilst there are no identified specific cycle routes/facilities within the area there is a well maintained road system, conducive to encouraging cycling. The recent rises in fuel prices has seen cycle sales soar with more bikes bought than cars. Cycle sales are outstripping cars as families look to cut costs. Recent sales figures suggest that Britain is becoming a far more enthusiastic cycling nation than its major European counterparts with average UK sales of 3.6 million bikes per year, compared with just over 2 million cars – a gap of 1.6 million. The Covid impact also encouraged more people to buy and use cycles as part of their daily exercise with the realisation that commuting by bicycle is a realistic option. Younger people in particular have caught the cycling bug, with half of 18 to 29 year-olds intending to cycle more, according to a survey of 500 people by RBC Capital Markets. This compares with 40% of all adults who say they want to be fitter and healthier. More people have taken up cycling as a hobby over the past few years, (during Covid lockdowns roads were lightly trafficked), and many are more are now also commuting to work by bike. Halfords recently disclosed that electric bikes and scooters have been its biggest sellers in the past 12 months, and e-bikes tend to be three times the price of normal bikes. The higher-end bicycle retailer Tredz posted 60% growth in like-for-like sales during the last Covid lockdown – in the first seven weeks of 2021 – and sales of traditional children and adult bikes were also up 43%.

With the recent innovation and popularity of electrically assisted bicycles or ‘E-bikes’ helping riders get up hills more easily and greatly reduce journey times – outlying areas like Pinner and Rickmansworth, would be easily accessible. The electric assisted bike can be a viable replacement for a car with all the environmental, financial, and other benefits that this entails. E-Bikes also carry heavier loads more easily than with a regular bike, so many commuting and leisure trips would now be an even more realistic possibility.

The developer will provide cycle parking on site for residents within their property.

Travelling by bus is a realistic option for residents wishing to access the local facilities and further afield providing a regular service across the local area throughout the day.

There are a number of supermarkets locally which offer home grocery delivery service, and each has its own website for residents to access and order their weekly shop. Stores also offer ‘Click & Collect’ where residents may pick up ordered groceries at their convenience, driving home after work for example.

Car sharing and car clubs can save money and time. It is an enjoyable experience and particularly useful for similar daily trips i.e. commuting to central London, Watford etc. Whilst home delivery is now a very popular way of food and clothes shopping there will be a desire or need to visit shopping locations. This is something residents could share and enjoy with neighbours.

It is intended that the development will operate in a sustainable manner that contributes to the wellbeing of the community by conforming to the core aims and objectives of the Hillingdon Local Plan.

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In summary, the application site is accessible by a wide range of sustainable transport modes other than just the private car. The development site is accessible by cycle, bus, underground and train as part of a linked trip.

Summary & Conclusion

This Transportation Advisory Note has been produced to provide a highway access appraisal report in respect of the proposed demolition of the existing dwelling at 6 Firs Walk, Northwood and the erection of 2 new dwellings.

It has been established that Firs Walk and Foxdell will provide a safe and suitable access to serve the proposed residential units without endangering existing or future highway users.

It is considered that the proposal would not have an unacceptably adverse or 'severe' effect on highway safety in conflict with the National Planning Policy Framework and therefore the development should not be refused on transport grounds.

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Appendix A

